

Guilty until proven innocent

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In a U.S. concentration camp, prisoners walk under the blazing sun in Tent City, Maricopa County, 1997. For almost 25 years, Tent City stood within a larger jail compound in an industrial area 10 minutes south of downtown Phoenix. At its peak, it comprised 82 Korean-war-era military tents and housed 1,700 inmates, almost all

Latinx, most with minor violations. Inmates were forced to work on chain gangs. Tent City was finally shut down in October 2017.

The so-called U.S. criminal justice system is just plain criminal. Two of its biggest atrocities are cash bail and solitary confinement.

Black Lives Matter activist Sandra Bland was held in a Waller County, Texas, jail because she couldn't afford \$5,000 bail.

Three days after Bland was arrested for a minor traffic violation, the 28-year old Black woman was found hanged in her jail cell on July 13, 2015. Many people don't believe she committed suicide.

Albert Woodfox spent nearly [45 years in solitary confinement](#) in Louisiana's notorious Angola prison. Woodfox, who with two other members of the Black Panther Party were known as the "Angola 3," was released in 2016.

The Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution — part of the Bill of Rights — clearly states that "excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Bail is excessive for anyone who can't pay it. Solitary confinement is torture.

Unable to afford bail, Kalief Browder spent three years in New York City's jail complex on Rikers Island before his charges were dropped. For two of those years, the Black youth was in solitary confinement without trial or conviction.

Kalief Browder was jailed when he was just 16 years old. Two years after his release he hanged himself on June 6, 2015.

Sparked by this tragedy, a grassroots movement forced the New York State Legislature to pass laws that largely did away with cash bail. Police and their

supporters launched a vicious campaign to repeal this needed legislation.

Cheering them on are Fox News and the New York Post, both owned by the billionaire hate-monger Rupert Murdoch. New York City Mayor Eric Adams also wants more people facing trial held on bail and more prisoners held in solitary confinement.

No justice for the poor

It's a big lie that everyone in the United States is considered innocent until proven guilty. Not being able to afford bail means you can't contact witnesses that could prove your innocence. Any effective legal defense is largely denied.

Being kept in hellholes makes many innocent people confess to lesser charges just to get out of jail. These forced confessions also prevent poor people from voting.

In 2020, [5.2 million people](#) were kept off the voting rolls because of a previous conviction. Just cashing a check with insufficient funds can be enough to block someone from voting. Their real crime was being poor.

On an average day, 533,000 people are being held in local, state and federal dungeons without being convicted. Ten million people are driven through these lock-ups every year. [Most people in jail](#) are legally innocent.

More than 80,000 people are in solitary confinement. The [United Nations Committee Against Torture](#) has repeatedly condemned the use of solitary confinement in the U.S.

Any jail or prison is dangerous. Nearly [3,000 imprisoned people](#) have died of COVID-19. That's criminal.

Who needs to be locked-up are billionaire CEOs who are jacking-up prices. In just

the first three months of 2022, the [five biggest oil companies](#) pumped out \$35 billion in profits.

The more than two million people in prisons are members of the working class. The labor movement needs to demand “Jobs Not Jails!”

On July, 14, 1789, poor people in Paris tore down a hated prison called the Bastille and started the French Revolution. There are thousands of bastilles across the United States. We need a socialist revolution to tear them down.

Kidnappers demand ransom. Bail is ransom for the poor while prisons are concentration camps for the poor.

